

FARMERS' MARKET OF THE MONTH

ELHAM

Working with Kent Farmers' Market Association, we put a different market in the spotlight each month

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Inside St Mary's Church, Elham

Packed with centuries of Kentish-style architecture, Elham can trace its roots back to the *Domesday Book* of 1086 and lies in the North Downs AONB, halfway between Canterbury and Folkestone. A market is held twice a year, in June and December, filling the village square, which is dominated on one side by St Mary's Church and on the other three by timber-framed buildings including the King's Arm pub and the Old Post Office.

It's run as a not-for-profit organisation by a team of local volunteers (including chairman Trevor Gasson), who represent various organisations in the community, including Elham Gardeners, who have a stall to sell their own fruit and veg, cut flowers, herbs and preserves.

Market secretary Anne Leva says: "We usually attract around 40 stalls selling local food and drink alongside hand-made crafts and gifts. At our Christmas market we have a barbecue, roast chestnuts, mulled wine and the Chancel Café inside the church."



What's in season at the Farmers Market: May

Bob Taylor is Vice Chairman of Kent Farmers' Market Association,

manager of Shipbourne Farmers' Market, a board member of the National Association of Farm Shops and Farmers' Markets and a member of the Tonbridge Town Team

May brings the first shoots of one of our seasonal treats - asparagus, so if you do find the first pale green spears at the market, buy them! Asparagus is at its best when picked and cooked within hours. Make the most of the distinctive flavour by serving simply steamed with melted butter, griddled with shaved Parmesan or toss with crumbled local goat's cheese and a vinaigrette. Look out for tender little early English new potatoes and early



Photo: Getty Images

A treat for May: the first asparagus

summer leaves such as spinach, watercress and lettuces. Make the most of green outdoor rhubarb this month in crumbles, pies and fools. By the end of the month the earliest gooseberries should be available, ready to pair up with their perfect partner, fragrant elderflower. Add a head or two of the flowers to the gooseberries for a few minutes as they cook, then lift out and discard. Lemon sole, cod, halibut and sea bass are all good at this time of year and shellfish fans should keep an eye out for razor clams and cockles. For meat eaters, spring lamb will start to appear this month, while local reared beef and pork will be at its most succulent as the grazing starts to green up. Splash out on steaks, chops and fillets and use them simply cooked - grilled, stir fried or griddle cooked for lighter meals.

Indeed St Mary's plays a key role at both markets, housing a busy café and most of the craft stalls. Among the summer attractions in and around the square is a themed Scarecrow Trail, encouraging locals and visitors to have fun exploring the village by seeking out hidden Worzel Gummidges.

Manager Julie Woodgate says that Elham is close-knit and the market helps bring the community together in a special way. "It's great to see farmers, local business people and residents all getting together to support the village community. It takes a lot of work for the committee to organise everything, but it's always worthwhile."

"We plan to have up to 30 stalls at both our summer and winter markets, selling as much locally produced food as possible including seasonal fruit and vegetables (some organic) and from eggs and cheese to fresh meat and wine," adds Anne Leva.

VJ Game often has a stall selling locally sourced products, from venison and boar to black pudding and smoked fish. Alexander Hunt of Potash Farm is a popular stallholder and seller of an amazing range of products made with Kentish cobnuts. "Although the market is only held twice a year, it's always well attended and has a great, friendly and relaxed atmosphere. It has a rural feel to it, and the dogs are always so well behaved."

Alexander's packed stall has bags of chocolate-covered cobnuts, fudges and brittles, flavoured oils, cosmetics including oil soaps and balm, and gifts carved from fallen trees from the orchard, or platts, as cobnut plantations are colloquially known.

Cranbrook Conserves' shelves offer home-made jams, marmalades, chutneys and pickles. "It's a great market, busy and compact," says stallholder Craig Brown. "At the summer market we'll have chutneys and pickles using our summer harvest including courgettes, coriander, and cucumbers."

Cheese lovers are well catered for with cheesemonger Jane Bowyer of the multi-award winning Cheesemakers of Canterbury. Cheeses for sale include hard, such as the cow's milk; cheddar such as Ashmore Farmhouse; semi-hard and soft cheeses are made by hand using traditional, labour-intensive methods.

"We use vegetarian rennet and produce both pasteurised and unpasteurised ranges," adds Jane. Also on the stall is The Cheesemakers' own brand of pasteurised Cowslip Butter, made at Dargate with freshly churned Kent cream from cow's milk sourced from Kingcott Dairy of Staplehurst, flavoured with Maldon sea flakes.

Home-made meals, including vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free dishes, are found on Zippy Santer's stall, usually set in the middle of the market square. The beautiful shepherd's hut always draws an appreciative crowd. At the Christmas fair it's used as a Santa's grotto with actor Pam Ferris, famous for her role in the TV series *Darling Buds of May* (which was filmed nearby), starring as Mrs Santa. ♦
Elham's 2019 summer market is on 16 June 2019, 11am-2pm.
www.kfma.org.uk/elham



Cobnut King Alexander Hunt of Potash Farm

FIND OUT MORE

For more information about your local (and other) Farmers' Markets, go to www.kfma.org.uk.



RECIPE : Wild sea trout with asparagus

Ingredients

(Serves 4)

- 1 bunch asparagus
- 1 white onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 200g purple-sprouting broccoli
- 200g new potatoes
- 6 radishes
- 1 bunch watercress
- 1 nasturtium plant
- 1 lemon
- Cornish sea salt
- 800g wild sea trout
- Kentish cold-pressed rapeseed oil

Method

Peel and slice the onions

Peel and chop the garlic

Roughly dice the potatoes

Snap the bottom woody part of the asparagus spear off then cut each spear into three

Place all of the above onto a baking tray, drizzle with rapeseed oil and season with sea salt

Cut the sea trout into four and lay on top of the vegetables, season with a little salt.

Roast in the oven at 180°C for 20 minutes

While it's cooking pick some leaves and flowers from the nasturtium plant

Slice the radishes, roughly chop the watercress and put to one side



Cut the lemon in half

Remove the tray from the oven, squeeze over fresh lemon, take the sea trout off and mix in

the nasturtium, radishes and watercress with the vegetables

Place the sea trout back on top and serve at the table.